MARVEL COMICS

X-MEN

JULY '96 2

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF CYCLOPS AND PHOENIX™

WRATH OF THE HIGH LORD™

THE ORIGIN OF MR. SINISTER™ CONTINUES!

S.C.

MARTINBROUGH '95

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

1859...

All that stands between the mutant High Lord *Apocalypse* and a world unprepared for his genetic holocaust are *Scott Summers* and *Jean Grey* – the *X-Men* known as *Cyclops* and *Phoenix*. Time-lost and alone, their only hope may be an obsessed scientist whose theories have made him an outcast...

But as *Nathaniel Essex* edges inexorably toward self-destruction, he has also drawn the attention of Apocalypse – who seeks to form an unholy alliance with him... one which could condemn the planet to millennia of untold death and suffering!

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1859

BENEATH THE GAS-LIT STREETS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY LONDON, A STRANGER HAS APPEARED...

...A TIME-LOST FIGURE WHO WILL ONE DAY BE A CHAMPION FOR THE DOWN-TRODDEN, THE DIFFERENT AND THE WEAK...

...JUST THE KIND OF POOR AND TWISTED CREATURES WHO NOW ATTACK HIM.

TAKE ME BACK TO DEAR OL' BLIGHTY!

'OLD 'IM! HE MUST BE ONE OF COOTIE'S BOYOS!

HOW CAN THEY KNOW THAT THIS MAN -- SCOTT SUMMERS, THE MUTANT KNOWN AS CYCLOPS -- IS THEIR FRIEND?

THEY ARE MERELY THE LATEST PRODUCTS OF THE GREAT INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION...

...HUMAN PIG IRON, BLASTED IN A FURNACE OF PAIN, FEAR AND SUFFERING.

IS THIS HELL, HE THINKS? AS ANOTHER BONY LIMB SMASHES INTO HIS FACE.

ONE MINUTE HE IS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK WITH JEAN, HIS WIFE AND FELLOW X-MAN.

BUT NOW...

...SNATCHED BACK IN TIME BY THE MYTHIC CLAN OF TELEPATHS CALLED THE ASKANI...

...HE FINDS HE IS A FREAK AMONG FREAKS.

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BUT EVEN AS THE TORTURED SOULS TRY TO SMOTHER HIM...

...HE WILLS HIS MIND TO CLEAR, HIS FIGHTING INSTINCT TO KICK IN.

...TEMPORARY BLINDNESS IS NO GREAT HANDICAP.

STAY AWAY! I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU!

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?!

FOR THE MOMENT, DEPRIVED OF HIS RUBY QUARTZ VISOR --

-- THE ONLY THING CAPABLE OF HOLDING IN CHECK HIS EXPLOSIVE OPTIC BLAST --

-- HE IS EFFECTIVELY BLIND.

BUT IN THIS CLOSE, DARK BEDLAM...

DON'T LISTEN -- HE'S A MARAUDER!

WHY DON'T 'E OPEN 'IS EYES?

MAYBE 'E'S ONE OF US?

I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO DO THIS!

'E'S GOT FIRE IN HIS EYES!

WHAT IS HE?

AT LEAST I GOT A PICTURE OF WHERE I AM.

THAT SHOULD DISCOURAGE THEM... FOR A WHILE. LOOKS -- AND SMELLS -- LIKE I'M IN SOME KIND OF SEWER.

BUT IF I'M HERE -- WHERE'S JEAN?

THAT DEVIL-SPAWN'LL MURDER THE LOT OF US!

CAN'T GIVE IN TO PANIC. GOTTA CALL OUT TO JEAN WITH MY MIND -- THROUGH OUR PSIONIC RAPPORT!

JEAN! JEAN, WHERE ARE YOU?

CAN YOU --

— HEAR ME?

SCOTT?

SCOTT?

NO USE. HIS THOUGHTS... SO WEAK... CONFUSED. AND IN *PAIN*...

WHERE IS THIS? YES... *WESTMINSTER ABBEY* --

-- AND I'D SAY BY DRESS AND ACCENTS...

SHE JUST... FELL FROM THE SKY...

... LIKE AN ANGEL!

... I'M AT LEAST A *CENTURY* IN THE *PAST!*

— AND HE'S IN TROUBLE!

I'VE GOT TO FIND HIM —

LADY... MADAM...

ARE — ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? WHERE ARE YOU *GOING*...?

BUT *HOW* -- AND WHY?

THAT'LL HAVE TO WAIT. SCOTT'S HERE, TOO --

I'M QUITE WELL, FATHER.

OUTSIDE...

THE WORLD SEEMS TO SLOW DOWN, AND PASSERS-BY BECOME VICTORIAN MANNEQUINS ON A FROZEN FILM SET.

ONLY JEAN GREY -- THE X-MAN CALLED PHOENIX -- SEES REALITY'S DOMINION USURPED.

WH... WHO..?

WHO *ARE* YOU?

JEAN GREY... GUARDIAN OF HE-WHO-SHALL-DELIVER-US...

... I AM *SANCTITY*...

... LAST OF THE *ASKANI SISTERHOOD*, BURDENED WITH GUARDING THE TIMELINE.

IT IS *I* WHO HAVE HUMBLY BROUGHT YOU AND *DAYSPRING'S FATHER* TO THIS AGE.

YOU ARE CHARGED WITH AN *AWESOME DUTY!* IF YOU DO NOT SAVE THIS *PRESENT*...

... THEN THE *FUTURE* IS *DAMNED!*

LOOK AT THIS WORLD, MILADY. A WORLD OF GAS AND STEAM, OF CLUMSY MACHINES AND *CRUDE SCIENCE.*

WOULD THERE BE ANYONE IN THIS WORLD ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE POWER OF...

...THE *EVIL ONE?*

THE *EVIL ONE..?* YOU MEAN --

APOCALYPSE?

AS IT WAS ALWAYS TO BE, O LADY OF GOODNESS.

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE ARE AS ONE... BUT EVEN WE *ASKANI,* THOUGH ABLE TO TRAVEL ALONG THE *SPOKES OF THE AGES...*

...CANNOT STAND OUTSIDE THE *WHEEL OF TIME...*

MEANING... YOU SEE ONLY A FRAGMENT OF THE *BIG PICTURE.*

YES. BUT THE *ANCIENT TEXTS* SPEAK OF A PLACE CALLED...

...*MILBURY HOUSE* --

-- WHERE THE *FORKING PATHS* OF *DESTINY* MEET...

...AND WHERE YOU WILL FIND A MAN... A MAN CALLED *ESSEX.*

A MAN WHOSE SOUL WILL BE THE *BATTLE-GROUND...*

...ON WHICH THE FATE OF THE FUTURE WILL BE DECIDED!

WE CAN MAINTAIN YOUR PHYSICAL FORMS FOR A *LIMITED TIME* IN THIS AGE, O LADY...

YOU HAVE JUST *FORTY-EIGHT HOURS...* TO FIND ESSEX... AND *STOP* THE RISE OF *APOCALYPSE!*

ALL OUR FUTURES -- EVERYTHING YOU HAVE KNOWN...

...LIVES OR DIES IN *THESE* TWO DAYS!

WITHOUT WARNING, THE SISTER OF THE ASKANI VANISHES...

...AND JEAN GREY IS ALONE.

ALONE, WITH A FINAL, FLEETING PSYCHIC IMAGE OF HER DEAR SCOTT.

USING HER AWESOME TELEPATHIC POWERS, SHE REACHES OUT FOR HIM...

EVEN AS, IN MILBURY HOUSE, REBECCA ESSEX TRIES TO REACH OUT FOR HER OWN HUSBAND...

...WHILE AN UNINVITED GUEST -- THE ANCIENT DESPOT KNOWN TO TIME AS APOCALYPSE -- LOOKS ON...

NATHANIEL, DON'T YOU SEE THAT WHAT YOU DID WAS *EVIL!* EVIL, WICKED AND... AND *INSANE!*

YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND ME, WOMAN.

AND I PRAY I *NEVER* WILL!

BY GOD! IF YOU THINK I... I *ENJOYED* WORKING ON THE BODY OF OUR *DEAD SON...*

...IF YOU THINK MY ACTIONS INDICATE A LACK OF *GRIEF...* THEN YOU DO ME A *DISSERVICE!*

DON'T YOU SEE, REBECCA? I AM... I AM A *PIONEER!* A *SCIENTIFIC EXPLORER!*

JUST AS *LIVINGSTONE* EXPLORES THE UNCHARTED REGIONS OF THE *DARK CONTINENT...*

...SO DO I EXPLORE THAT *DARKER CONTINENT* THAT IS OUR *SPECIES' FUTURE!*

NO, NATHANIEL! THAT WON'T DO! THESE ARE *EXCUSES,* NOT *REASONS!*

AT FIRST YOUR WORK WAS FOR THE *BENEFIT* OF MANKIND...

NOW MANKIND AND EVEN YOUR OW *FAMILY...* IS THER FOR THE BENEFI OF YOUR *WORK!*

NO AMOUNT OF *GENIUS* GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO PLAY *GOD!*

A SUDDEN, SHOCKING PAIN ERUPTS FROM HER HEAVY WOMB...

OH... DEAR LORD.

I SWEAR... YOU WILL BE THE RUIN OF US ALL...

IF YOU ARE SUCH... A GENIUS... WHY CAN YOU NOT MAKE THIS PAIN... *ABATE!*

REBECCA... YOU MUST *REST.* IT SERVES NO PURPOSE TO BECOME SO *AGITATED.*

I WILL DO ANYTHING IN MY POWER TO STOP YOUR SUFFERING. *ANYTHING!*

THERE IS... ONE THING...

SPEAK IT...

ARE YOU WILLING TO ABANDON THE *MAD EXCESS* TO WHICH YOUR WORK IS TAKING YOU?

PLEASE... GIVE THAT UP... FOR THE SAKE OF *ME* AND... YOUR UNBORN CHILD...

REBECCA, I...

I...

YOU HESITATE *TOO LONG*, SIR.

PETER DENIED *OUR SAVIOUR* THRICE BEFORE THE COCK CROWED.

DO NOT EXPECT SUCH PATIENCE FROM *ME!*

REBECCA! PLEASE -- !

LET HER BE.

IF YOU ARE A GENIUS AS YOU SAY... YOU MUST LEARN TO ALLY INTELLECT WITH *STRENGTH.*

TELL ME OF THE MAN CALLED *DARWIN...*

... WHOSE THEORIES OF *SURVIVAL* OF THE *FITTEST* MIRROR MY OWN...

... AND HOW YOU ARRIVED AT YOUR *OWN* CONCLUSIONS.

FOR IT IS NO *COINCIDENCE* THAT LED ME TO THIS HOUSE OR *YOU* --

-- BUT ANOTHER *SIGN* THAT THE TIME OF *MY ASCENDANCY* HAS ARRIVED!

NO, SIR, I THINK *NOT...*

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, OR FROM WHICH END OF *JERMYN STREET* YOU PROCURE YOUR OUTLANDISH GARB, BUT PLEASE LEAVE MY HOME.

MY NAME IS *EN SABAH NUR* -- I WOULD BE OF USE TO YOU... AND YOU TO *ME.*

THERE IS SOMETHING IN THIS STRANGER'S EYES.

AN INTENSITY... A POWER. HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE.

AND NOW THAT ESSEX HAS BEEN BRANDED AN OUTCAST BY HIS PEERS...

HE COULD USE SOME POWERFUL ALLIES.

AS NATHANIEL ESSEX TURNS TO LEAVE THE ROOM, SOMETHING STOPS HIM.

HE LOOKS AT THE DOOR, THROUGH WHICH REBECCA LEFT.

A VOICE SEEMS TO SAY, "THERE IS STILL TIME, MAN. THERE IS STILL TIME TO GO AFTER HER... "

V-VERY WELL, I WILL SHOW YOU MY WORK, THOUGH I *WARN* YOU, YOU MIGHT FIND IT...

... SHOCKING.

OH, I *DOUBT* THAT.

AND THEN ANOTHER, MORE ANCIENT VOICE --

COME ALONG, ESSEX. THE FUTURE AWAITS US...

THREE *SKULLS*... THREE *SIGNPOSTS* ON EVOLUTION'S JOURNEY. A JOURNEY THAT HAS TAKEN *MILLIONS OF YEARS.*

AS I HOPE YOU HAVE SEEN FROM THIS TOUR OF MY LABORATORY, THE NEXT STEP ON THIS JOURNEY, THE *GREATEST* STEP OF ALL...

... IS ALMOST *UPON* US.

THESE... FREAKS ARE BUT NATURE'S FAILED EXPERIMENTS. HUMAN SEDIMENT CAKED ON THE TEST-TUBES OF *PROGRESS.*

UNFORTUNATELY, I DOUBT I WILL LIVE TO SEE THE *GREAT MUTATION* — WHEN MEN WILL *EVOLVE* INTO BEINGS LIKE UNTO GODS!

— I KNOW WHAT *I AM!*

I AM AN *ANOMALY* — THE *FIRST BORN* OF THIS *GREAT MUTATION!*

INCREDIBLE!

AT LONG LAST... AFTER *TWO MILLENNIA* —

THE FIRST AND *MIGHTIEST* OF A SUPER RACE WHO WILL FOLLOW ME...

I AM AFRAID THAT TIME GROWS *SHORT,* SIR...

I HAVE A MEETING WITH SOME MEN WHO ARE ALSO CONCERNED IN SHAPING THE PLANET'S FUTURE.

POWERFUL MEN. *RICH* MEN. MY LAST CHANCE OF *SUPPORT*... NOW THAT I HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED BY THE *ROYAL SOCIETY.*

I WOULD LIKE TO MEET THESE... *POWERFUL MEN.*

WELL, I... I'M NOT SURE...

WHAT MAKES A MAN POWERFUL IS MY OWN AREA OF... *STUDY.*

I... SUPPOSE IT CAN'T DO ANY HARM.

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF THESE MEN. THEY CALL THEMSELVES *THE HELLFIRE CLUB.* BUT DO NOT BE *FOOLED.*

THE FAMED HOUSE OF *LUST* AND *DECADENCE* IS BUT A *SMOKESCREEN* FOR THEIR *REAL* WORK...

LONDON.

SHE HAS COME TO THE HIGHEST POINT OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY... THE BETTER TO SEARCH WITH HER MIND FOR SCOTT.

WHY *US*, SANCTITY?

HAVEN'T WE GIVEN *ENOUGH?* HAVE OUR SACRIFICES IN THE *PRESENT* MEANT SO LITTLE THAT WE HAVE TO TRAVEL INTO THE *PAST* TO SET THINGS RIGHT?

THIS PLACE IS, IN ITS OWN WAY, AS *ALIEN* AS THE FUTURE THE ASKANI PULLED US INTO.

BUT THE LOVE SCOTT AND I SHARE WAS ENOUGH TO PULL US THROUGH *THEN...*

... AND THROUGH THE AGES, NO MATTER WHERE WE ARE, IT *ALWAYS WILL BE.*

SEE THE ADVENTURES OF CYCLOPS AND PHOENIX TRADE PAPERBACK--Mark.

BENEATH THOSE SAME STREETS...

THEY'RE BACKING OFF... BUT FOR HOW LONG?

GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT THIS PLACE IS. GOT TO GET IN TOUCH WITH...

SCOTT?

JEAN! I WAS JUST...

THINKING OF ME. I KNOW.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? I HAD SUCH A FEELING OF... OF CONFUSION, DARKNESS...

DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, I'M FINE. IN SOME KIND OF SEWER... EVEN GOT A LITTLE COMPANY...

...I JUST WISH I KNEW WHAT WAS *HAPPENING!*

ACROSS THE STATIC OF VICTORIAN CONSCIOUSNESS, SHE TELLS HIM ALL SHE KNOWS...

... ONLY FORTY-EIGHT HOURS, SCOTT... IF WE DO NOT SUCCEED IN STOPPING HIM, *APOCALYPSE* WILL RULE THIS WORLD!

BY THE TIME WE ARE BORN... THE PLANET WILL HAVE BEEN HIS FOR OVER A HUNDRED YEARS.

BUT FIRST WE NEED TO BE TOGETHER — OUR COMBINED MUTANT POWERS--

THAT HAS TO WAIT, JEAN. FOLLOW THE LEAD THAT SANCTITY GAVE YOU. I WANT TO FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN HERE.

IF WE KNOW THE ASKANI, IT WASN'T A COMPLETE FLUKE THAT I ENDED UP IN THIS HOLE.

THERE SHE IS — NAKED BENEATH THAT COAT!

IS THIS TRUE, CHILD? YOU ENTERED THE HOUSE OF GOD IN A STATE OF... OF *SHAME?*

MILBURY..?

GOD HELP ME, I HAVE, MADAM.

A PLACE WHERE THE DEVIL'S WORK IS DONE... AND THE DEVIL'S OWN IDEAS ARE *PROPAGATED.*

SOON, TRAVELLING SOUTH FROM LONDON.

SHE IS SORRY THAT THE CABBY WILL GET NO FARE FOR HIS NIGHT'S WORK... NOR HAVE ANY MEMORY OF HIS JOURNEY...

FATHER, PLEASE... I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS. I HAVE TO FIND A PLACE CALLED *MILBURY HOUSE!*

HAVE EITHER OF YOU HEARD OF IT?

THE OWNER IS A MAN MORE UNGODLY THAN *DARWIN* HIMSELF...

BUT IF HE KNEW THE THREAT *APOCALYPSE* POSED HIS WORLD, HE WOULD NOT QUIBBLE OVER THIS FREE RIDE.

EVENTUALLY, THE BROODING FACADE OF THE ISOLATED ESTATE COMES INTO VIEW.

SHE SHIVERS AS SHE APPROACHES ITS BALEFUL COUNTENANCE.

THE ENTIRE HOUSE SEEMS TO EMIT A SENSE OF ROTTENNESS... OF EVIL...

...OF GRIEF.

SHE FINDS HERSELF THINKING OF YOUNG NATHAN DAYSPRING SUMMERS — THE MAN WHO GREW UP TO BE CABLE.

THE TERRIBLE DECISION SCOTT HAD TO MAKE TO SEND HIM INTO THE FUTURE...

...INTO THE ARMS OF THE *ASKANI*... AND WHERE SHE AND SCOTT EVENTUALLY TRAVELLED TO RAISE HIM.

SHE FEELS, MORE ACUTELY THAN SHE CAN EXPLAIN, A PARENT'S GRIEF AT A CHILD...

AS REBECCA ESSEX LOWERS THE CORPSE OF HER DEAR DEAD SON BACK INTO HIS TROUBLED GRAVE --

-- SHE WHISPERS THE WORDS OF A PRAYER --

ADAM STANISLAUS ESSEX

Beloved Son of Nathaniel

1853 - 185

-- TO A GOD SHE IS ONLY JUST MANAGING TO BELIEVE STILL EXISTS.

AS IN A DREAM, SEES A APPROACHING...

... WOMAN, WALKING BETWEEN THE MOSS-COVERED HEADSTONES.

THIS IS PRIVATE PROPERTY.

WHAT DO YOU *WANT*?!

SHE FINDS WORDS HARD TO ARTICULATE.

THE [illegible] CHILD, THE TINY COFFIN...

... STIFLING AIR SUFFERING...

I AM...

... I AM TRYING TO FIND MY *HUSBAND*.

HOW... AMUSING. SEEING AS I SEEM TO BE IN THE VERY PROCESS OF *LOSING* MINE.

THAT'S FUNNY, IS IT NOT? DON'T YOU FIND THAT...

... *FUNNY*?

NO. AND I DON'T THINK YOU DO, EITHER.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, AND I DON'T MEAN TO INTRUDE UPON YOUR SORROW...

... BUT I AM HERE ON A MATTER OF *VITAL* IMPORTANCE...

... AND I HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT A... *MISTER ESSEX* MIGHT BE ABLE TO *HELP* ME.

THEN GOD -- IF INDEED SUCH A CRUEL CREATURE EXISTS -- THEN *GOD HELP YOU.*

FOR I DO BELIEVE THAT MISTER ESSEX CANNOT EVEN HELP *HIMSELF.*

Oh... DEAR LORD, FORGIVE ME... BUT WHAT [redacted] I TO *DO?*

HE IS NOT A BAD MAN! THE DEATH OF OUR SON... IT *TURNED* HIM.

POISONED HIM.

HE WAS A *SCIENTIST*... A *GENIUS*... AND YET HE COULD NOT SAVE HIS *BOY!*

I THINK I HAVE... AN IDEA OF WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH.

HOW *COULD* YOU?!

MY OWN HUSBAND... SUFFERED [redacted] A SIMILAR WAY.

NATHANIEL TRIED TO WORK HIS PAIN AWAY, BUT INSTEAD BECAME OBSESSED... EVEN... WICKED...

... BUT WAS THAT HIS *FAULT?*

WE ARE ONLY FLESH AND BLOOD! BEND US WITH ENOUGH FORCE... AND DO WE NOT BECOME *TWISTED?*

AS REBECCA CRIES OUT HER ANGUISH, JEAN IS DRAWN TOWARD THE STRANGE-LOOKING ANNEX TO MILBURY HOUSE...

WHERE ARE YOU GOING? WE MUST NOT GO *NEAR* THAT PLACE!

WAIT!

I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS, REBECCA. I'VE GOT TO KNOW...

... WHY I'VE BEEN SENT HERE.

AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE ANNEX, JEAN GREY TREMBLES WITH A PREMONITION...

PLEASE, LADY... WE MUST NOT ENTER...

COURAGE, REBECCA!

THESE POOR PEOPLE! WHAT IS YOUR HUSBAND *DOING* TO THEM?

IT IS... HIS *WORK.*

WORK? THIS ISN'T WORK.

THIS IS *EVIL*, PURE AND SIMPLE.

WHO'S THIS BOY —? HE SEEMS TO BE *REACHING OUT* FOR ME...

I... SEE... YOU ARE MUTE... BUT PLEASE... ALLOW ME INTO YOUR MIND...

... LET US SPEAK IN THAT LANGUAGE *BEYOND WORDS...*

JEAN TELEPATHICALLY ENTERS DANNY'S MIND...

WHAT'S YOUR NAME? DON'T BE AFRAID...

... HERE, YOU CAN SPEAK.

I... MY NAME IS DANIEL. ARE YOU LIKE THEM? LIKE THE BAD MAN?

NO, DANIEL, I'M NOT. SHOW ME. SHOW ME WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE...

YES... THAT'S HIM... THE ONE CALLED **ESSEX.** AND OBVIOUSLY, IN DISGUISE, **APOCALYPSE.**

BUT DANIEL... WHERE'D THEY GO?

YOU MUST **NOT** GO THERE, MISS! THOSE MEN —

DANIEL... PLEASE. YOU **MUST** TELL ME.

THEY WENT TO A PLACE CALLED... **THE HELLFIRE CLUB.**

WH- WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I HAVE **WORK** TO DO.

AND SO HAVE **YOU...** IF YOU ARE WILLING TO HELP ME!

MEANWHILE...

I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU -- BUT I NEED YOUR *HELP!*

AIN'T NO HELP HERE.

YOU'S ONE OF THE *MARAUDERS!*

NO -- HE'S JUST A *FREAK* LIKE *US!*

YOU'D BETTER GET USED TO THIS PLACE, FREAK. IT'S WHERE WE *BELONG.*

LISTEN...

WOODEN CAGES... IRON BARS... CONCRETE WALLS...

...THEY MIGHT *IMPRISON* YOU... BUT THEY DON'T MAKE YOU A *PRISONER...*

IT'S WHAT'S *INSIDE* YOU THAT DOES *THAT!*

LOOK! YOU CAN *ESCAPE!* I'LL HELP YOU!

BUT I NEED HELP IN RETURN!

I NEED SOMEONE TO BE MY *EYES!*

BUT THE "FREAKS" STARE NUMBLY AT THE BROKEN BARS...

...AS THOUGH THE ONLY THING THEY FEAR MORE THAN CAPTIVITY...

...IS FREEDOM.

THAT MOMENT...

WHAT'S ALL THIS RACKET?

BLOODY —! LOOK'T THE BARS!

OO'S THAT BLOKE! SHOOT 'IM, OSCAR!

THE MECHANISM IS CRUDE, THE BARREL WARPED...

... BUT LEAD IS LEAD...

... AND PAIN...

... PAIN...

SIMULTANEOUSLY, THROUGH THEIR PSIONIC RAPPORT, JEAN GREY FEELS A SYMPATHETIC EXPLOSION OF HEAT IN HER ARM...

... AND THE SHARED PAIN IS A KIND OF TELEPATHIC BRIDGE...

FLESH WOUND — NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

I'M TRYING TO FIRE OVER THEIR HEADS... SCARE THEM OFF...

... ANY NEWS ON APOCA-LYPSE?

I... THINK SO...

SCOTT?!

I'M GOING TO THE HELLFIRE CLUB, IN LONDON —

THE HELLFIRE CLUB?!

YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE HORRORS I'VE SEEN TODAY, SCOTT. THIS MAN, NATHANIEL ESSEX, THERE'S SOME-THING...

SCOTT —?

BLAST! ALL ALONE.

I DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO *FIGHT* THESE GUYS...

OKAY, BLIND BOY... NOW YOU GET A *SLAP*.

NOT THIS TIME, *MARAUDER*.

JEEZ! THE FREAKS ARE *FIGHTIN' BACK!*

AIN'T POSSIBLE!

TOO MANY OF 'EM!

WITHIN SECONDS, THE MARAUDERS ARE FLEEING.

BUT ONE OF THEM SLIPS...

...FALLS...

...AND WAITS FOR CERTAIN DEATH.

KILL HIM!

KILL THE MARAUDER!

WAIT!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, GET OFF HIM!

IT'S *OSCAR STAMP!*

'E AIN'T AS BAD AS THE OTHERS —

D- DON'T LET 'EM HURT ME! *PLEASE!*

SHUT UP AND *LISTEN!* DO YOU KNOW WHERE *THE HELLFIRE CLUB* MEETS?

I... I... SUPPOSE I DO...

THEN YOU CAN FILL [redacted] IN ON WHAT'S *HAPPENING* DOWN HERE ON THE WAY.

OO... OO *ARE* YOU, MISTER?

JUST A FREAK, OSCAR.

JUST A FREAK... WHO'S *FIGHTING BACK.*

THE HELLFIRE CLUB...

...WHERE EN SABAH NUR FINISHES OUTLINING HIS VISION OF THE FUTURE... TO THE GATHERING OF RICH, POWERFUL...

...AND INCREDULOUS MEN.

...AND FROM THE ASHES OF THIS GLOBAL UPHEAVAL, THE *STRONG* SHALL RISE!

THE FEEBLER SPECIMENS OF HUMANITY WILL BE EITHER *DESTROYED* OR *SUBJUGATED* --

-- WITH NONE OF THE PITIFUL *MERCY* SHOWN AT THE MOMENT.

MISTER ESSEX WILL BE MY FIRST *PRELATE* --

-- HELPING TO CONTROL THE MASTER RACE -- WHOSE *DESTINY* IS NEARLY MANIFEST!

MY GOD! IMAGINE BEING ABLE TO CONDUCT MY EXPERIMENTS ON SUCH A SCALE!

IMAGINE THE *PROGRESS* THAT COULD BE MADE, UNSHACKLED BY CONCERNS OF *MONEY* OR *MORALITY!*

SCIENCE FOR THE SAKE OF *SCIENCE!*

BUT... BUT THE *TURMOIL* HE SPEAKS OF -- SO *SAVAGE.* SO... *INHUMAN.*

WHAT PLACE WOULD THERE HAVE BEEN IN SUCH A WORLD FOR MY DEAR, DEPARTED *ADAM?*

BUT WAIT, SIR! DO NOT DIGNIFY HIS RANT WITH YOUR INTELLIGENCE! 'TIS NOTHING BUT THE DELUDED RAMBLINGS OF A *LUNATIC!*

LORD BRADDOCK... Mr. SHAW... GENTLEMEN... IN MY DESPERATION FOR YOUR... ASSISTANCE... I ALLOWED MYSELF TO BELIEVE THIS MAN WAS *GENUINE.*

I... APOLOGIZE.

SO YOU SHOULD, ESSEX. HE'S A *BUFFOON!*

WE IN THE HELLFIRE CLUB HAVE WORKED SILENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY FOR YEARS TO ACHIEVE OUR AIMS!

FROM WHAT AUTHORITY DOES THIS... THIS FOREIGNER SPEAK?

AUTHORITY?

I WILL SHOW YOU FROM WHAT *AUTHORITY* I SPEAK!

THE ROOM FALLS SILENT...

...AS AN *INCREDIBLE METAMORPHOSIS* TAKES PLACE!

HE'S... *CHANGING!* BEFORE MY *EYES!*

THEY *LAUGHED* AT ME -- *MOCKED* MY THEORIES OF THE *GREAT MUTATION!*

BUT THIS... *THIS* IS THE *LIVING PROOF...*

... THAT I WAS *RIGHT!*

I WAS RIGHT...

... AND YET...

... LOOK AT THIS... *CREATURE!*

"LOOK AT THIS...

"... *MONSTER!*"

"IS THIS MY *BRIGHT, PURE FUTURE?*"

LOOK UPON THE FACE OF DESTRUCTION, *WORMS!*

WITNESS THE TRUE FORM OF **APOCALYPSE!**

BECAUSE YOU MEET IN DARK ROOMS, BECAUSE YOU HAVE MONEY AND INFLUENCE, YOU CONSIDER YOURSELVES *STRONG!*

YOU ARE NOTHING BUT WEAK, COMPLACENT *PARASITES!*

ONCE I KNEW A MAN WHO THOUGHT AS YOU DO. FULL OF *PRIDE*, HE THOUGHT HIS SO-CALLED *ROYAL BLOOD* GAVE HIM POWER.

BUT FOR MORE THAN A THOUSAND YEARS, HE HAS BEEN MY *SLAVE.*

AND UNLESS *YOU* SERVE ME... YOU WILL HAVE A MOST *INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE...*

... OF **death!**

KNOW IT IS MY CUSTOM TO *REMOVE THE EYES* OF THOSE UNFORTUNATE ENOUGH TO *BEAR WITNESS* TO MY POWER.

... BUT THE LOOK OF FEAR IN YOURS TELLS ME IT IS *UNNECESSARY.*

YOU WILL *AWAIT* MY INSTRUCTIONS.

COME, ESSEX. I BELIEVE THIS MEETING IS... *CONCLUDED.*

NEARBY, A LONELY EMBANKMENT ON THE THAMES...

...A ROWING BOAT MOORS...

'E MUST BE A DEMON, SIR.

'E CHANGED SHAPE AND DONE SOMEFING TO COOTIE AN' SOME OF THE OTHERS... SOMEFING UNNATURAL.

HAS HE TALKED ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE... OF BEING STRONG?

'E HAS, SIR! DO YOU KNOW 'IM THEN?

YOU COULD SAY THAT. ARE WE NEAR?

IF ME CONTACTS ARE RIGHT, THEY'RE MEETING ACROSS THE STREET FROM HERE.

TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I NEVER LIKED PICKING ON THOSE FREAKS AND MENTAL CASES...

... BUT COOTIE SAID WE 'AD TO CHANGE WITH THE TIMES LIKE AN' --

WHOAH!

OSCAR!

GOT YOU!

B-BUT... HOW COULD A BLIND MAN DO THAT?

WELL, YOU SEE, OSCAR... I HAD A LITTLE HELP...

"... SOMEONE ELSE IS ACTING AS MY EYES NOW."

SCOTT...

... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

THEY HAVE BEEN PLUCKED WITHOUT WARNING FROM THEIR OWN TIME...

...THEY ARE CHARGED WITH AN AWESOME DUTY...

...THEY ARE UP AGAINST THE MOST POWERFUL AND EVIL CREATURE KNOWN TO TIME.

BUT FOR ONE BRIEF, STOLEN MOMENT...

...AS JEAN TELEKINETICALLY LOWERS HERSELF INTO SCOTT'S ARMS...

...THEY ARE JUST TWO PEOPLE...

...GRATEFUL TO BE REUNITED.

THIS MAN, ESSEX... APOCALYPSE IS *USING* HIM SOMEHOW...

I KNOW... AND HE'S RECRUITED A SMALL *ARMY!*

BUT AS LONG AS YOU AND I STICK TOGETHER... THEY DON'T STAND A *CHANCE.*

SIR! THERE THEY ARE -- RUNNING LIKE FRIGHTENED FISHWIVES.

THAT FOREIGN-LOOKING ONE WITH THE FUNNY 'AT, *HE'S* THE DEMON!

APOCALYPSE! THIS IS *IT*, JEAN... WHAT WAS IT *SANCTITY* SAID?

IF WE DON'T SAVE THE PRESENT, THE FUTURE IS *DAMNED!*

LOOK, SIR! THAT'S THE OTHER ONE I TOLD YOU ABOUT...

"... NATHANIEL ESSEX!"

WH... WHAT...

I MEAN... WHO... ARE YOU... SIR?

I AM THE *FUTURE.*

B-BUT MY THEORIES SUGGEST... THE MUTATION SHOULD NOT OCCUR FOR SEVERAL *GENERATIONS!*

I AM *ABOVE* YOUR THEORIES. AS A MAN WITH WEAK EYES CANNOT STARE INTO THE SUN... ... SO YOU -- FOR ALL YOUR GENIUS -- COULD NOT QUITE ENVISION A BEING OF MY...

... *MAGNITUDE.*

SCOTT -- DO YOU *SEE* IT --?

YES. ESSEX *IS* THE MAN WHO NEARLY DESTROYED OUR LIFE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY...

ESSEX IS SINISTER!

... OR WILL *BECOME* SINISTER.

LOOK AT HIM, JEAN. SO *WEAK*... SO *HUMAN.*

IT WOULD BE SO EASY... ONE *OPTIC BLAST* WOULD DO IT...

... IN ONE INSTANT, SINISTER WOULD BE *WIPED* FROM THE HISTORY BOOKS!

ALL THE *SUFFERING* HE WILL CAUSE... ERADICATED! BUT... CAN YOU KILL A MAN FOR WHAT HE *MIGHT BECOME?*

ESSEX IS STILL HUMAN, HE THINKS.

P HE BE STOPPED FR SINISTER?

P WHAT ASKANI

SCOTT SUMMERS' DELIBERATIONS ARE RUDELY INTERRUPTED BY THE MARAUDERS...

...MONSTROUSLY ENHANCED BY APOCALYPSE'S ALIEN TECHNOLOGY.

UNLIKELY

PALE BRITISH SKIN-AND-BONE SHOCKED TO STEELY *APOCALYPTIC WARRIORS.*

BLAST! I THOUGHT WE ONLY HAD *APOCALYPSE* TO DEAL WITH!

YOU'D BETTER SCARPER, OSCAR ME LAD. THIS IS NO PLACE FOR A SIMPLE BOY FROM THE *MILE END.*

GET YERSELF BACK HOME AND FORGET YOU EVER CLOCKED YOUR EYES ON THIS...

MY GOD! WHAT NOW? THAT MAN... AND WOMAN... IT'S *NOT POSSIBLE!*

HOW COULD MY THEORIES BE SO *WRONG?* SUCH ■ BEING SHOULDN'T BE BORN FOR ANOTHER *CENTURY* OR SO!

BUT SEE HOW THEY *FIGHT?* DOES YOUR BLOOD NOT *ROAR!* DO YOU NOT FEEL THE *FIRE* IN YOUR *BELLY!*

LIFE IS BUT AN ONGOING *TEST,* ESSEX --

-- AND *THIS* IS THE ONE I HAVE SOUGHT SINCE TIMES OF OLD!

SHAK

MY TIME IS *AT HAND!*

TO THE STRONG, THE WORLD!

TO THE WEAK...

DEATH!

LONG HAVE I AWAITED ANOTHER SUCH AS MYSELF, STRANGER.

YOUR MIGHT IS TRULY GLORIOUS...

...BUT NONE MAY OPPOSE ME!!

INCREDIBLE! HE'S TAKING THE BRUNT OF MY OPTIC BLAST —

— AND IT'S BARELY HOLDING HIM BACK!

7

SCOTT! HOLD ON!

I'M —

SNIKK

AHWWIL

JEAN! NO! OUR TELEPATHIC LINK IS *SEVERED!*

SHE'S UNCONSCIOUS... SINKING... SHE'LL *DROWN!*

MUST... USE... ALL... MY STRENGTH...

IT IS *OVER.*

WHOEVER THIS CREATURE IS, HE IS A TRULY COURAGEOUS OPPONENT. BUT ULTIMATELY, HE IS NOT *FIT.*

AND SO HE MUST BE *DESTROYED!*

I SHALL GIVE HIM TO *YOU*, NATHANIEL ESSEX.

T-TO... ME?

WHAT WOULD *I* WANT... WITH THIS... STRANGE BEING?

SNIKK

YOU'RE GOING TO K-KILL HIM?

NO... I HAVE A *BETTER* IDEA.

OHHGNN!

DO YOU FORGET YOUR *RELIGION* SO QUICKLY, ESSEX?

UNTIL NOW YOU HAVE ONLY WORKED IN *THEORY*... ON PATHETIC FREAKS... DRY BONES AND DEAD FOSSILS.

HERE IS A *LIVING SPECIMEN* OF WHICH YOU DREAMED, THAT YOU CAN *DISSECT*...

... EXAMINE...

... UNDERSTAND.

MERCIFUL GOD! THE WAY THIS YOUNG MAN AND THAT WOMAN LOOKED AT EACH OTHER...

... JUST AS REBECCA AND I USED TO LOOK AT EACH OTHER...

BUT HOW CAN I REFUSE?

I HAVE WORKED TOWARDS THIS ALL MY LIFE -- HOW CAN I *NOT* DO AS THIS MONSTER SAYS?

THERE IS A PRICE, ESSEX. FIRST, YOU MUST *JOIN* ME!

YOU MUST ALLOW ME TO *RELEASE* YOU FROM THE STUPID CHAINS OF WEAKNESS AND MORALITY THAT YOU STILL CLING TO.

IN RETURN I OFFER YOU THE CHANCE TO FOLLOW YOUR WORK TO ITS *END*...

... WITNESS SIGHTS *UNDREAMED* OF...

... USHER IN THE *NEW AGE* YOU HAVE FORETOLD!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, I...

ENOUGH!

YOU WILL GIVE ME YOUR DECISION *WHEN NEXT THE SUN SETS!*

WITH THAT, THE AGELESS CONQUEROR AND HIS MINIONS ARE SWALLOWED IN A BLINDING FLASH...

... LEAVING A MAN ALONE TO MAKE A CHOICE THAT WILL DECIDE HUMANITY'S FATE.

TOMORROW? AND WHAT *THEN?* WHAT NEW *PRICE* WILL HE EXACT?

HE IS A BRUTE... WHO ONLY WANTS MY LEARNING FOR HIS OWN ENDS...

...WHO WOULD HAPPILY DESTROY *ALL KNOWLEDGE* IF IT SERVED HIS PRECIOUS DRIVE TOWARD *POWER.*

BUT...

...TO HAVE THE MEANS... THE *LONGEVITY* TO PURSUE MY WORK TO THE *LIMIT?*

DO I NOT OWE IT TO *SCIENCE ITSELF* TO ACCEPT HIS OFFER?

AND... WHAT IS TO BECOME OF THIS WORLD IF *HE* IS THE ONLY GUIDING HAND FOR THIS NEW RACE?

-=hkk! Kakk!=-

HE.. HELP!

Hmmmm?

SOMEONE... IN THE RIVER?

MISS? DID YOU FALL FROM A BOAT?

YOU'LL CATCH YOUR *DEATH!*

HOW...

SC... SCOTT?

WHERE'S... SCOTT?

YOU?

NEXT The Origin of A Species